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ABSTRACT

Racism has taken on both blunt and subtle forms in America. Blacks as well as whites have been taught for many years that black people are inferior to white people. So, what we actually have is a double barreled barrage of racism to combat. Because of controversy concerning relevant and meaningful educational opportunities for the lower socio-economic black students, white educators of black students have been signaled out for review and challenge. The changing urban society and the emerging and changing black concept are seen by some to be the biggest causes of this new controversy. The task of the elementary counselor in an urban setting is to be cognizant of all factors which play an important part upon the cultural values and self concept of his black counselees. The counseling service should be designed to either affect all children directly or it should help to create an atmosphere and school environment in which all children find the necessary security and self confidence which will enable them to grow and mature into productive adults. Quality-plus approaches (not color) are needed to counsel black children in the urban school today. (KJ/Author)

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RACE AND THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR

This afternoon I will address myself to the topic: RACE AND THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELOR. Although my topic will be confined primarily to the urban setting, counselors in suburban areas should not tune out. For the urban problem in a large sense is also a suburban problem and any ills which confront the inner city will eventually spill over into the free living style and temporary haven of the suburbs. Racism is not just a white phenonemon. Therefore, my black colleagues, stay in tune. There has been some speculation that many middle class blacks either consciously or subconsciously share similarity of attitudes with whites so far as lower class blacks are concerned. Black colleagues, I hope that my previous statement did not strike a grievous blow to your ego. If, however, it did - - then it is my hope that you will have the courage - the spirit and determination to make the necessary self adjustments. For it is y o u who will have to bear the heavy burden of helping to combat racism.

Racism in elementary counseling is a relatively new concern. Not because racism is new but because elementary counseling is a relatively new concept.

The status of guidance and counseling in the elementary school is forging ahead with fantastic speed. Unfortunately, the contaminating and corrosive attitudes surrounding the issue of race is not far behind.

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To illustrate the growth of elementary counseling, one need only take a look at the survey conducted in 1967 by Van Hoose and Vafakas which revealed that 3,837 counselors were working in the elementary schools in 48 states. Two years later another study was conducted by Van Hoose and Sister Kurtz which revealed that the number of elementary counselors had nearly doubled (6,041) with the number of states increasing to 50 in addition to the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands.

With this information there seems to be little question that elementary counseling is steadily increasing and from our knowledge of child growth and development, there seems to be little doubt that the elementary counselor will clearly have a significant influence on the directions our young counselees are headed.

An assessment of one's own attitudes and beliefs should be made before undertaking the task of understanding, interpreting and modifying the behavior of pupils at the elementary level because of the profound impact elementary counselors may have on the developing child.

This brings me to the essence of my subject "Race and the Elementary Counselor". No matter where we perform our counseling skills, we are <u>all</u> victims of one gigantic, disturbing element of our society - racism. Not to be inflicted with this "disease" - racism, is to be at variance with the established pattern of everyday living - perhaps not normal. Alarmed by this statement - don't be! You see, racism is not a sudden mental reaction or a sudden bitter repudiation of a fellow man by an individual. Racism is the systematized oppression by one race of people upon another.

Racism has taken on both blunt and subtle forms in America. It has operated so normally and naturally and is so much a part of the existing institutions of the society that many individuals involved are barely conscious of their operation. Consider this observation: Generation after generation of the black minority were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity and in as many ways possible, that black Americans were worthless human beings. Blacks were not expected to aspire to excellance. Blacks as well as whites have been taught for many years that black people are inferior to white people.

Black people themselves have contributed to this racist outlook - in their self concepts and self images. So, what we actually have is a double barreled barrage of racism to combat. Many black people had come to believe that blackness was bad, everything evil was black; such as black magic, black cats, black sheep, black boy and don't forget you can tell a little white lie but beware of a big black lie.

Blacks had rejected themselves because of the deprecating manner in which they have been treated in books, in movies, on television and in every other walk of life. All around them black people could see and hear "evidence of the Black man's inferiority". Black people were literally taught to love everyone else and to hate themselves simply because they were black.

Why so much concern about the race issue - especially at the elementary level? My following comments may well provide the answer.

Recent events have reactivated controversy concerning relevant and meaningful educational opportunities for the lower socio-economic black students in an urban setting. White educators of black students have been signled out for review and challenge. The changing urban society and the emerging and changing black concept are seen by some to be the biggest causes of this new controversy.

Changing Urban Society

The growth of megalopolis during the past half-century has produced vast social and economic changes in America. The steady influx of blacks to the urban areas to seek jobs, better housing and better educational opportunities in fulfillment of the American dream has been a cause for alarm on the part of most white Americans. The steady influx of blacks to the cities with what seems like a proportionate number of whites moving to the suburbs, has resulted in both racial and economic segregation in many urban areas. The high concentration of poor blacks in the inner city area is sometimes startling to many Americans. This problem has been compounded by the deteriorating nature of the educational process in the inner cities of America.

Many of the black inhabitants of the urban areas came poorly equipped to cope with their new environment. They had little or no money, and little knowledge of urban living. Many lacked formal education. In addition to their other barriers, they were even more seriously handicapped by racial, job, and housing discrimination. As pointed out by N. D. Glenn (1963) what began to develop

was a cruel and uneconomical cycle: (1) leading to inferior education, (2) leading to a denial of job opportunity, (3) leading to low income, (4) leading to poor housing and unstable family relationships, (5) leading to derogatory self-perceptions, (6) leading to low academic achievement, and (7) leading to substandard educational programs. Thus completing the cycle only to begin again.

Although we claim, in our best educational jargon, that education offers an equal opportunity to all, a combination of factors interact in the personal and interpersonal relationships of many educators to make the urban educational system a bad trip for most lower class youngsters.

Things are changing for the urban black today. Blacks are beginning to find a new self image as they are identifying more and more with their native culture. Slogans such as "Black Power", "Black is Beautiful" and songs such as "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud," "Moving on Up," "We're Rolling On", "To be Young, Gifted and Black ", "Message to a Black Man" and "We Shall Overcome", are illustrative of the new Black doctrine of self-pride, self-love, self-esteem and cohesiveness which is rapidly emerging among Black people throughout America. The clamor for Black History, new African hairstyles and modes of dress are just a few more illustrations of a new self-determination of the emerging Black in the urban areas of our nation.

Guidance Functions and Counselor's Tasks

The task of the elementary counselor in an urban setting, then, is to be cognizant of all the aforementioned factors which

play an important part upon the cultural values and self-concept of his Black counselees. Acknowledging this information, the counselor should attempt to help create values and understandings among the pupils so that they will be better able to cope with their changing urbanization and socialization.

Guidance programs must be implemented which will help elementary pupils to overcome the obstacles which they are confronted with daily. The counseling services should be designed to either affect <u>all</u> children directly or it should help to create an atmosphere and school environment in which <u>all</u> children find the necessary security and self-confidence which will enable them to grow and mature into productive adults. The counseling function is widely recognized as a <u>key</u> activity for helping the pupil overcome many intellectual, emotional or social barriers which might impede his educational and developmental growth.

For the white counselor in today's inner city arena this is no easy challenge, for, at his back, he always hears the voices of angry blacks claiming that white teachers, administrators and counselors are not getting the job done with black students.

Small Scale Research and Speculation

There has been a lot of speculation and some small-scale research about the relative influence of administrators, teachers and expecially counselors (none at the elementary level) on the educational growth and development of black inner city pupils.

In a study conducted by Waldo Phillips (1960) with high school students it was revealed that a cultural barrier is present when a white counselor tries to counsel a black student. The barrier is

strong enough to keep the white counselor from obtaining satisfactory positive results with his interaction with the black minority in counseling. Phillips, further inferred that a white counselor, regardless of his ability, would find it very difficult to conceive life or a situation as a black person does, thus making it extremely hard to reflect that counselee's conception of his social-personal self and its relationship with society. Phillips concluded, however, that the white counselor could experience success with the black counselee by going through self analysis and the sociology of the blacks.

Donald Hugh Smith (1967) pointed out that in spite of the white counselor's inability to comprehend fully the continual hurt and hostility that most Negroes feel, he can with human feelings and cultural insights do an effective job of counseling Negro pupils.

Clemmont Vontress (1969) stated that cultural barriers could affect the counseling relationship. He suggested in-service and pre-service training to help counselors examine their attitudes toward the culturally different. He also felt direct exposure to the culture of their clients would help in overcoming these barriers.

Dennis Trueblood (1960) pointed out "That the function of the counselor in the guidance of Negro students is greatly complicated by the complexities of cultural and social class differences. It behooves the counselor, therefore, to learn as much about the backgrounds of his students as possible."

On the other hand, some speculation about the influence blacks have on black students has been presented by some authorities. Kenneth Clark (1955) states: "not only are the white educators' negative attitudes about Negroes detrimental to the education of Negro pupils, but so too are the attitudes black children have of themselves and the general white society, detrimental to their educational progress. Very early in life, Negro children become aware of their racial differences. Perhaps, television - magazines and newspaper pictures and intonation of parental attitudes contribute to the early awareness." Kardiner and Oversey (1962) cite evidence which indicates that in almost every Negro family the lighter children are favored by the parents. To be most loved as a Negro child, one has to appear least Negro. Clark concludes that "racial symbols are so prevalen t in the American scene that all normal children eventually perceive them."

Often heard in the Black Ghetto areas is the cry of "Black teachers, administrators and counselors for black students." "No white man can effectively identify with the black problem." George Henderson (1967) seems to feel that some Negroes may have a similar handicap, he writes, "It should be noted that many American Negroes who occupy high status positions have more Caucasoid than Negroid features." (hair, nose, skin) It is extremely difficult for Negro youths to identify racially with these "models". In another article, Henderson (1966) reviews the point of intra-racial discriminations based upon social class differences. He points out

the fact that many middle class Negroes reject lower class Negroes. "Psychologically, many Negro teachers reject lower class Negro students while accepting lower class white students. Conversely, many white teachers reject lower class white students but accept lower class Negro students. Often, these teachers are seeking to repress memories of their own lower class backgrounds."

James Coleman (1966) reporting to Congress, cited in his report that Negroes respond to good teachers regardless of race.

Kenneth Clark (1955) points out that a white teacher who is perceived as warm and accepting is of value to Negro children in a way a Negro teacher cannot be. The white teacher is a kind of booster for the Negro child's ego. She indicates that he will not be rejected arbitrarily by all whites as he may expect.

Summary and Conclusions

One could go on and on citing facts on the ability or inability of white educators to effectively educate black students.

From a review of the literature, I am inclined to postulate that "quality-plus approaches (not color) is needed to counsel black children in the urban elementary school today." Depending upon their beliefs and abilities, there is a greater need today for more black and white counselors alike in the inner city schools, especially male counselors. Once these counselors are identified they should be made cognizant of the cultural factors that may be prevalent and operative in the present environment of the students with whom they will be working. I hasten to add, however, that the black or white

guidance worker should have already assessed their views and attitudes of Negroes before accepting an assignment to a school attended by a greater percentage of blacks. I have very little faith that the prejudiced teacher or guidance worker can "confront his or her feelings" and realize his or her difficulties and then make the necessary adjustments in time to be an effective worker with inner city black students.

As you've heard from Dr. Combs many times today "Let yourself be the instrument."

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